

# Zone 5

---

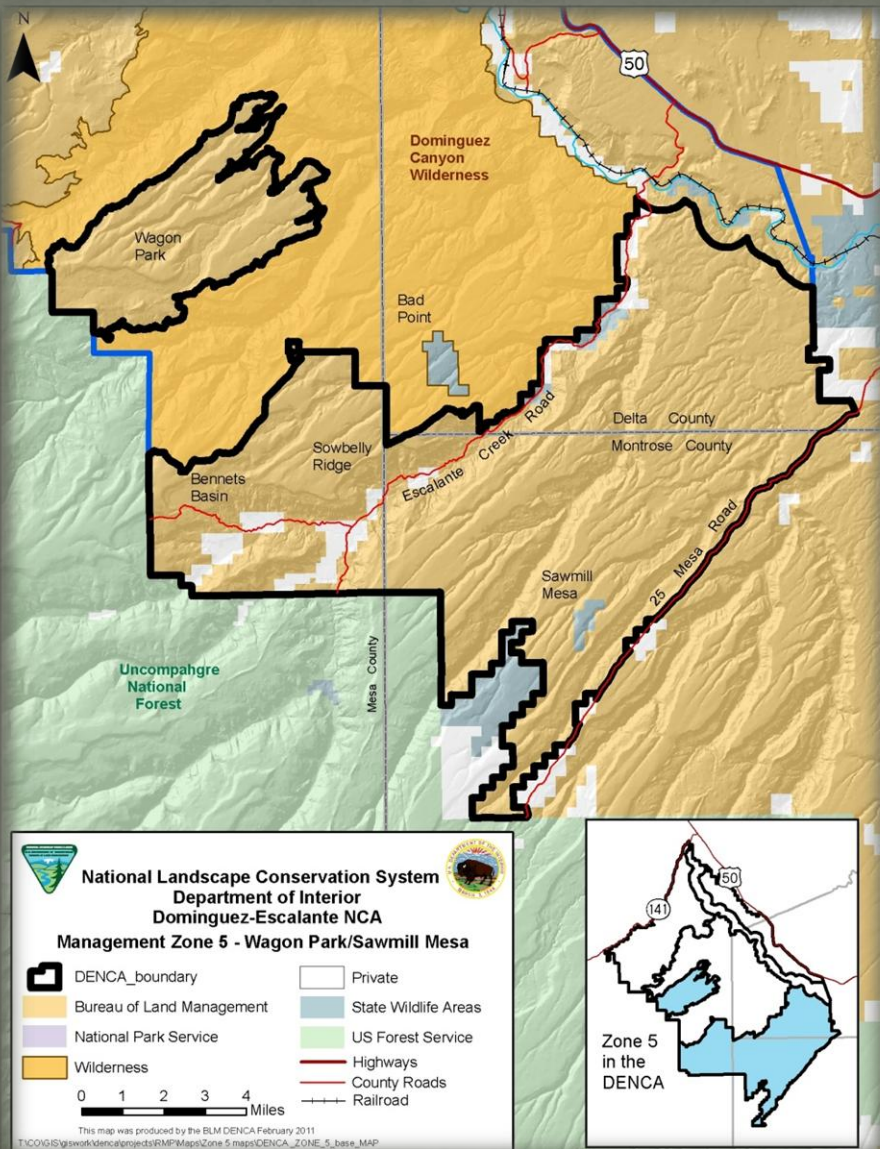
(Escalante Canyon, Sawmill and Dry Mesa, ridges southwest of Dominguez Canyon Wilderness (Sowbelly, Tatum, Camp) and Wagon Park

## Fact File

BLM land is  
73,800.1 acres.

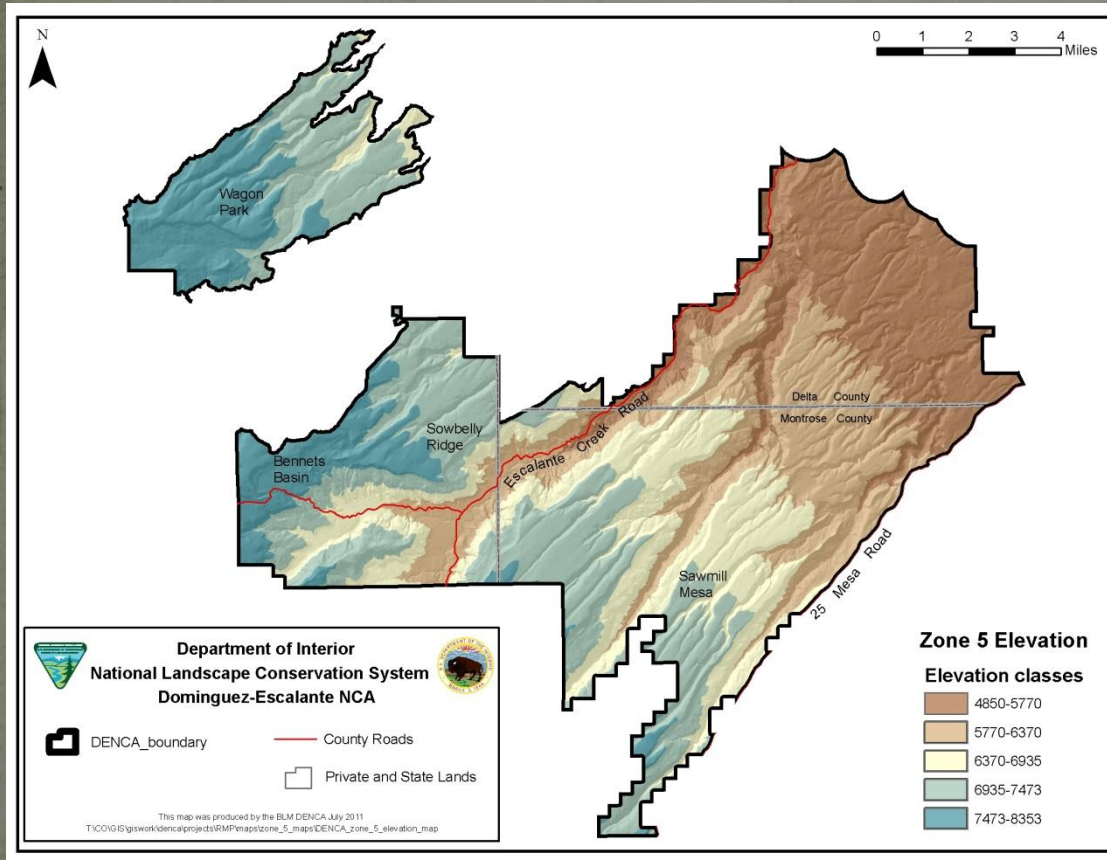
Private  
inholdings are  
3,084.4 acres.

State (CDOW)  
land is 968.3  
acres.



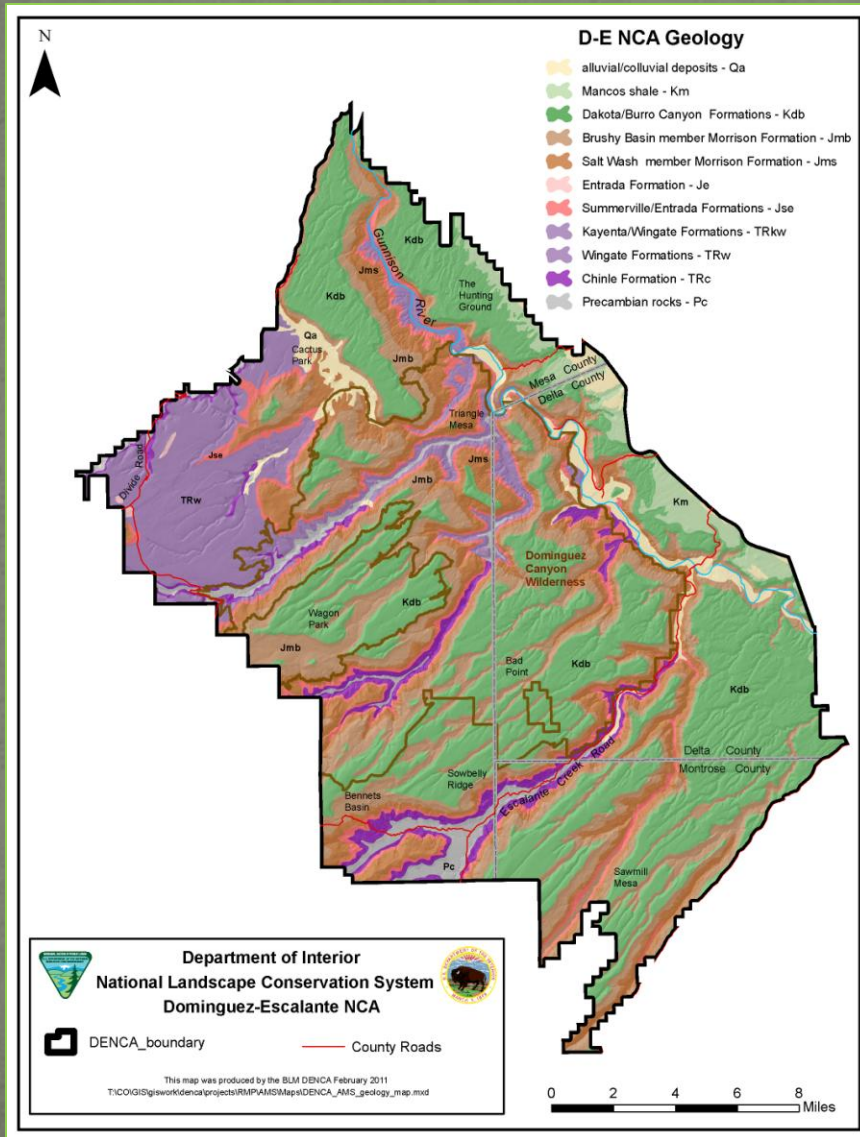


# Topography



- **Zone 5** ranges in elevation from low-lying areas nearest to the Gunnison River and the City of Delta to the upper elevations nearest to the National Forest
- **Major canyon systems** in this zone include Escalante, Dry Fork Escalante, and Cottonwood
- **Wagon Park** is located within the Mesa County portion of the NCA. It is largely surrounded by the Dominguez Canyon Wilderness and borders the National Forest

# Geology for Zone 5



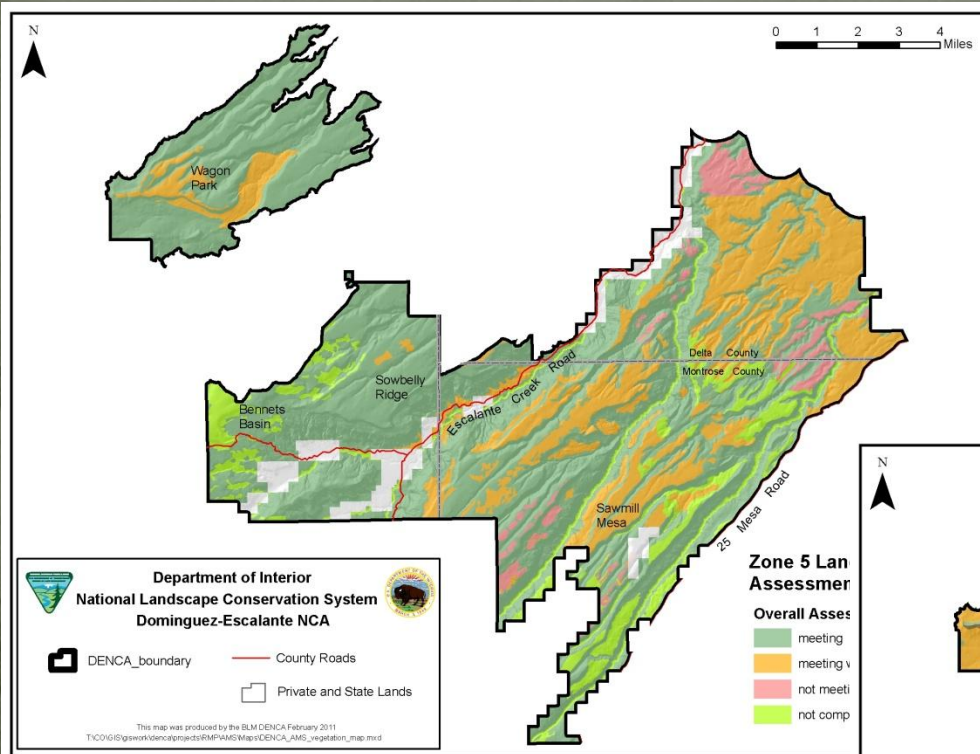
- Escalante Canyon contains spectacular geology. Descending formations seen in the cliff walls run through Salt Wash, Entrada, Kayenta, Wingate Chinle and pre-cambrian formations.
- The Brushy Basin formation can be found in parts of Zone 5. This formation has a high likelihood of containing fossils.





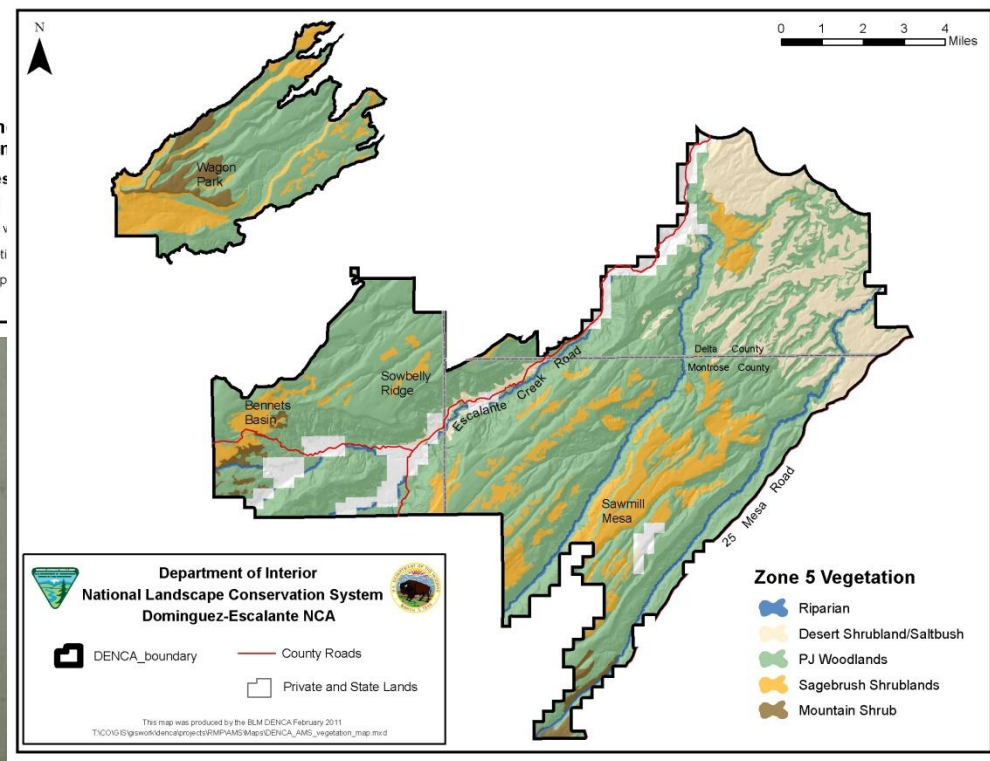


# Vegetation and land health in zone 5



## Results of Recent Land Health Assessments

- Meeting (67 %)
- Meeting with problems (22 %)
- Not meeting (4 %)

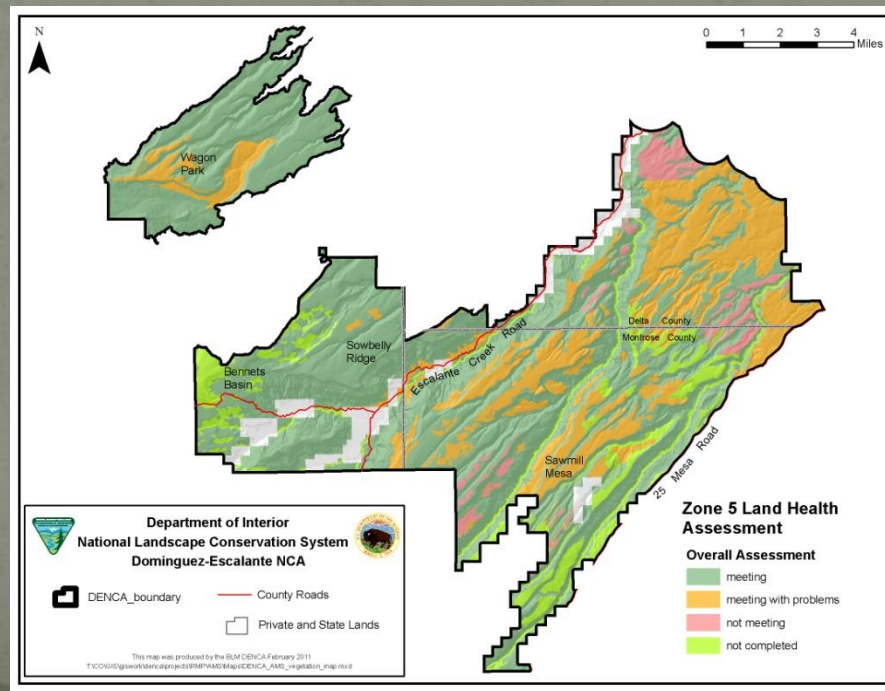


Desert shrub and sagebrush areas have the most land health problems. Parts of the riparian zones along Dry Fork Escalante and Cottonwood Creek also have land health problems.



# What are the land health problems?

- Loss of native grasses and forbs
- Spread of exotic/noxious weeds
- Low plant biodiversity
- Loss of native, riparian vegetation
- Low plant cover
- Loss of cryptogamic soils
- Mortality of Colorado hookless cactus
- Exposure of bighorn sheep to disease



# What has contributed to the problems?

cheatgrass

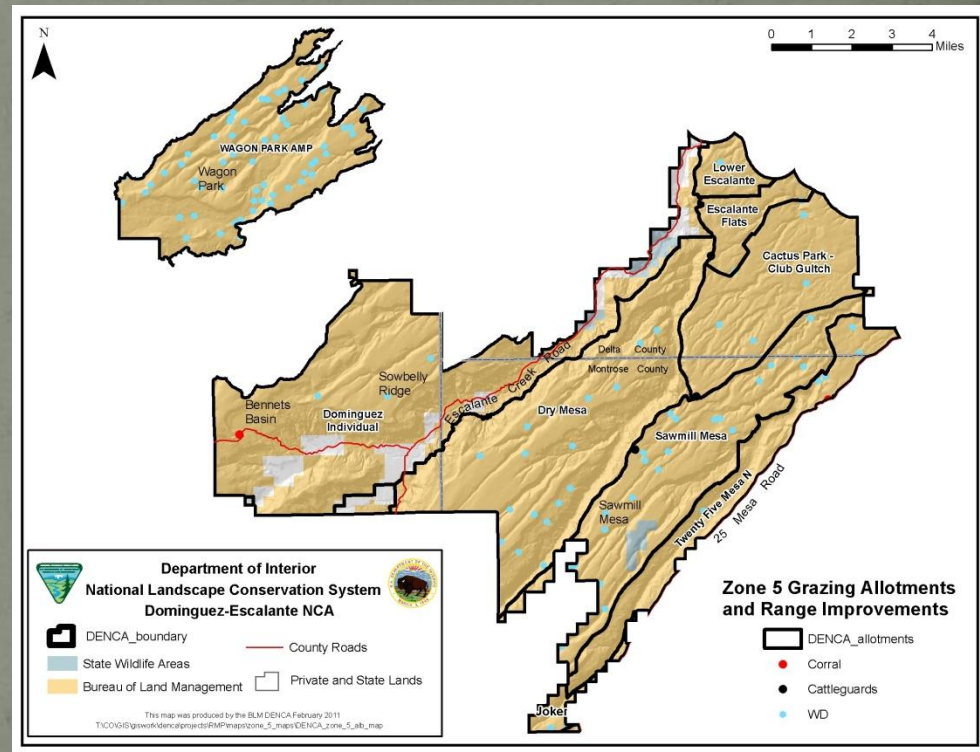
- Historic grazing
- Drought
- Spread of noxious/invasive plants
- Livestock grazing in riparian areas
- Water diversions and dams
- Roads and trails





# Livestock grazing

- There are **10** allotments in Zone 5
  - Two sheep allotments (Cactus Park-Club Gulch and Lower Escalante)
  - One mixed horse and cattle allotment (Sawmill Mesa)
  - Seven cattle allotments
- In the 1960s and 1970s, many of the mesa tops southeast of Escalante Canyon and in Wagon Park were chained and re-seeded with **crested wheatgrass**
- The BLM's inventory of range improvement projects identifies 117 **water** developments in this zone (stock tanks, dams, reservoirs, catchments, guzzlers)



# Special Status Species (only showing species that have been confirmed in the last 10 years in Zone 5):



## Threatened and Endangered Species

### •Colorado hookless cactus

## BLM Sensitive Species

- Desert bighorn sheep
- Grand Junction milk vetch
- Eastwood's monkey-flower
- Peregrine falcon
- White-tailed prairie dog
- Bluehead sucker
- Flannelmouth sucker
- Roundtail chub
- Colorado River cutthroat trout



# Escalante Canyon Area of Critical Environmental Concern

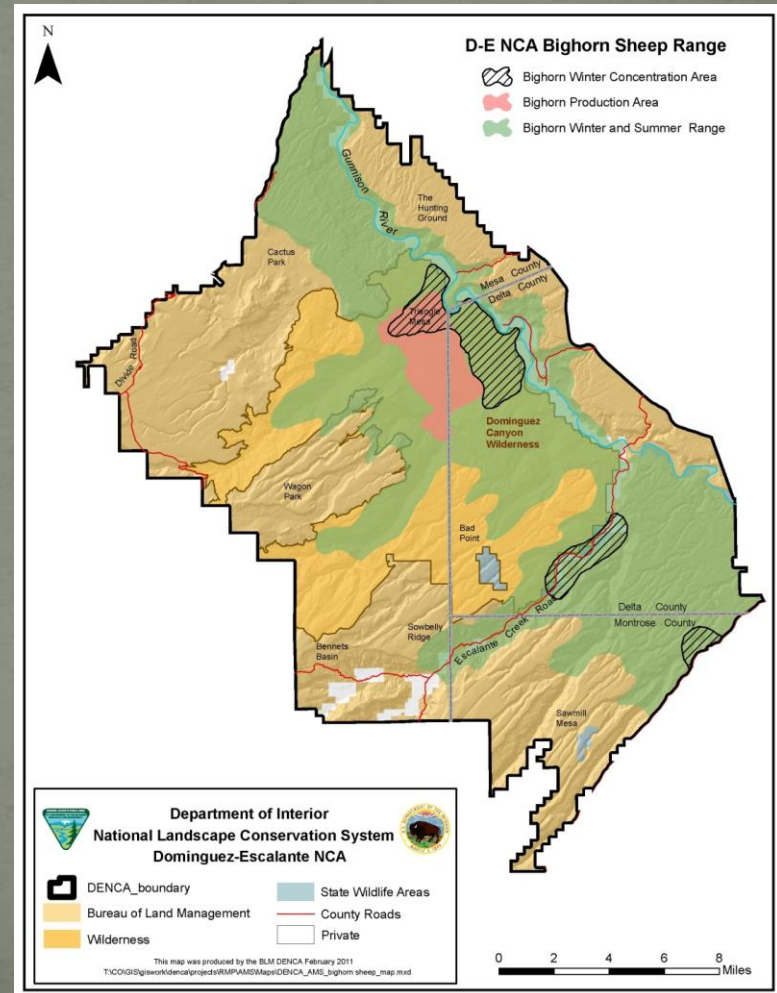


1,895 acres  
designated  
for sensitive  
plant species,  
natural  
seeps, and  
several  
globally-  
unique plant  
associations.

Recognized  
as a state  
natural area



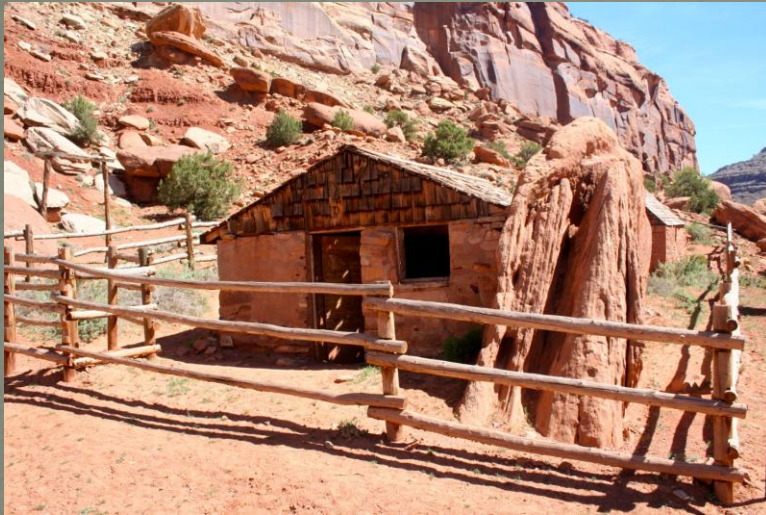
# Desert Bighorn Sheep





# Cultural Resources in Zone 5

Zone 5 contains a wide variety of prehistoric and historic cultural resources and has the potential to be managed as a heritage tourism destination



Cap Smith Cabin  
(state land)





# Recreation in Zone 5

The proximity of this zone to the City of Delta provides opportunities for Delta County and the City of Delta to benefit from tourism and recreation in this zone of the NCA.

Opportunities could include:

- Heritage tourism in Escalante Canyon
- Mountain biking
- Motorized recreation
- Quiet use recreation, particularly in Dry Fork Escalante and Cottonwood Creek canyons

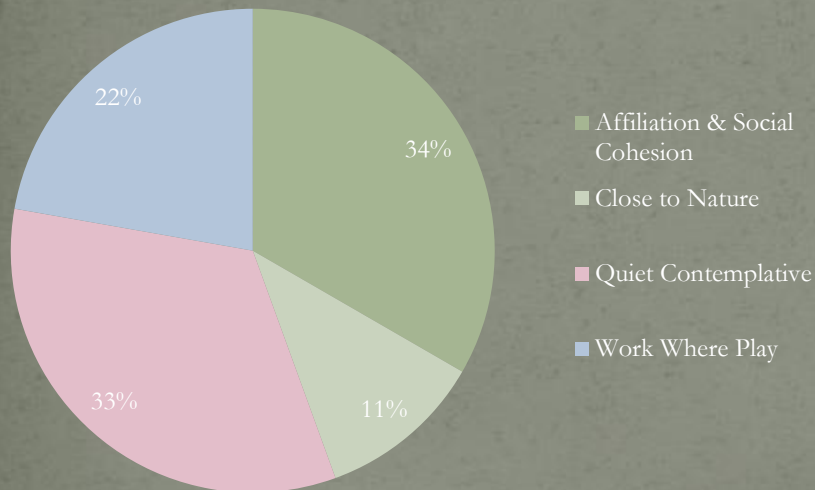




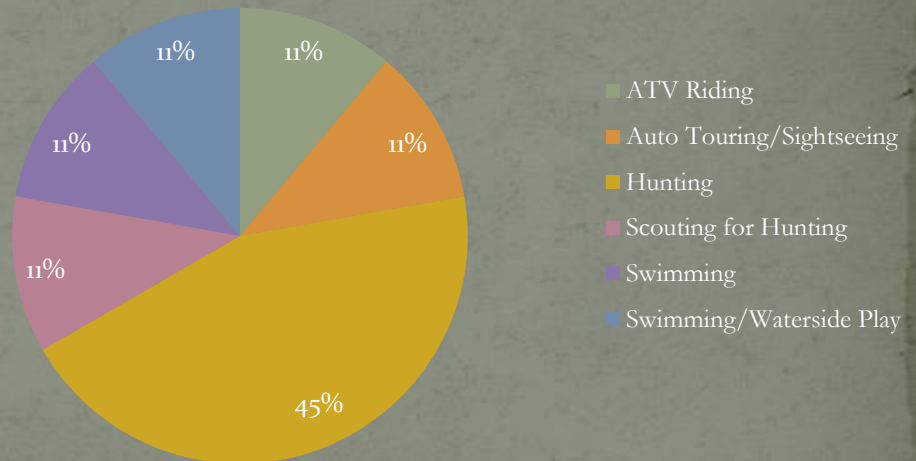
# Results of Mesa State Surveys

These surveys were conducted in Escalante Canyon

Niche bundles of recreationists in zone 5



Most satisfying activity in zone 5





# Escalante Canyon

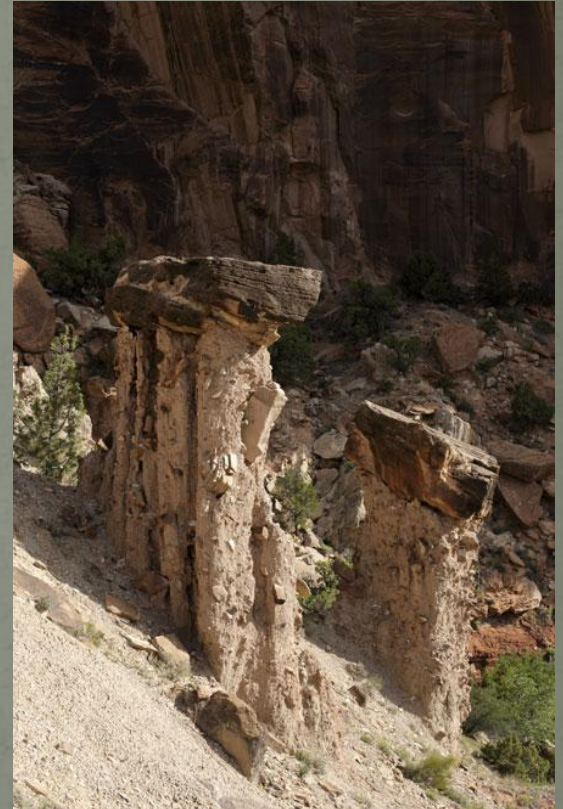




# Escalante Canyon

Popular activities in the canyon include:

- Auto touring
- Swimming at the potholes
- Camping at the potholes
- Wildlife viewing
- Rock climbing and bouldering
- Kayaking during spring runoff



# Problems associated with recreation in Escalante Canyon

- Potential for trespass on private property, as recreationists cross property to reach BLM lands or Escalante Creek. Complaints include gates left open, trash, noise, increased traffic and unauthorized camping.
- Safety issues associated with the potholes. The practice of visitors diving and jumping from heights 30-100 feet off surrounding cliffs into the potholes “has resulted in numerous accidents and at least five deaths over the last 12 years.”
- In 2005 the BLM implemented new rules for the potholes area and developed the area (facilities, etc) to encourage better stewardship



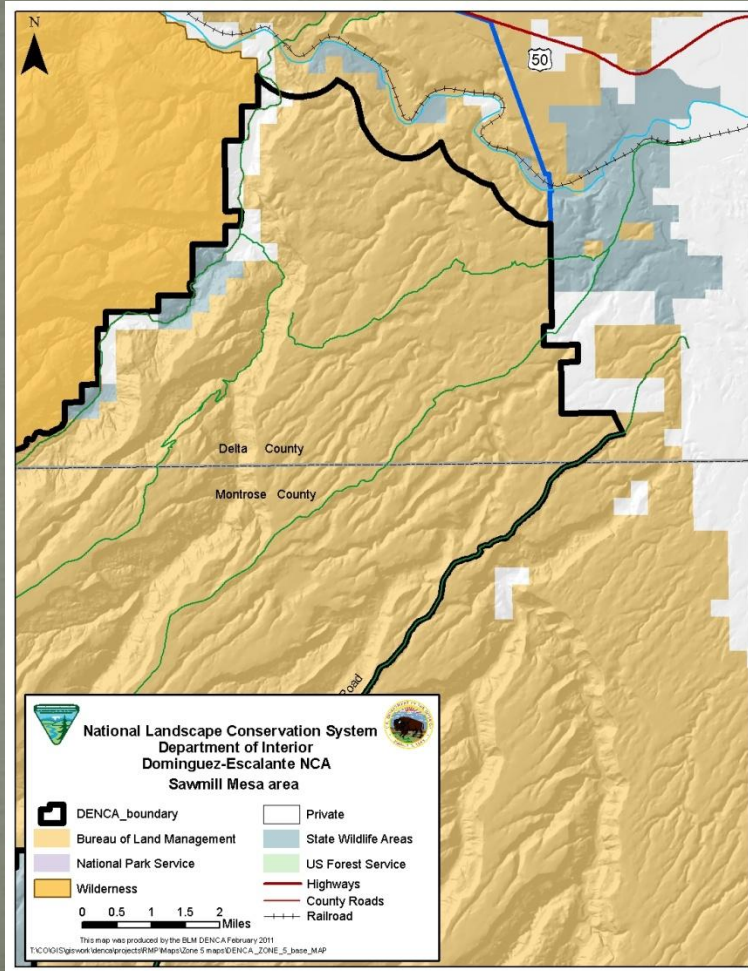
# Special management at Potholes to reduce damage and hazards

## It is now unlawful to:

- Camp outside designated campsites
- Cut live or dead trees
- Burn materials containing nails or metal or hardware, etc.
- Fail to keep sites free of all litter, trash, and debris during occupancy of a site and failure to remove all personal equipment and clean site upon departure
- Dive/jump from rocks, shore or any other means into the water
- Discharge firearms of any kind, including those used for target shooting or paintball weapons
- Possess glass containers
- Exhibit public nudity
- Burn wood fires

\*Resource damage included cutting trees down for bonfires; shooting or throwing glass bottles around the camping and swimming areas; leaving trash; and improper disposal of human waste. Underage drinking and drug use was associated with overnight camping and bonfire parties.

# Mountain Biking



- The **mountain biking** community has identified the Sawmill Mesa area for a potential single-track trail system in the NCA. The mountain bike community would like an SRMA-type mountain bike trail system somewhere in the DENCA
- The topography of this area and proximity to Delta lends itself well to the development of mountain bike trails

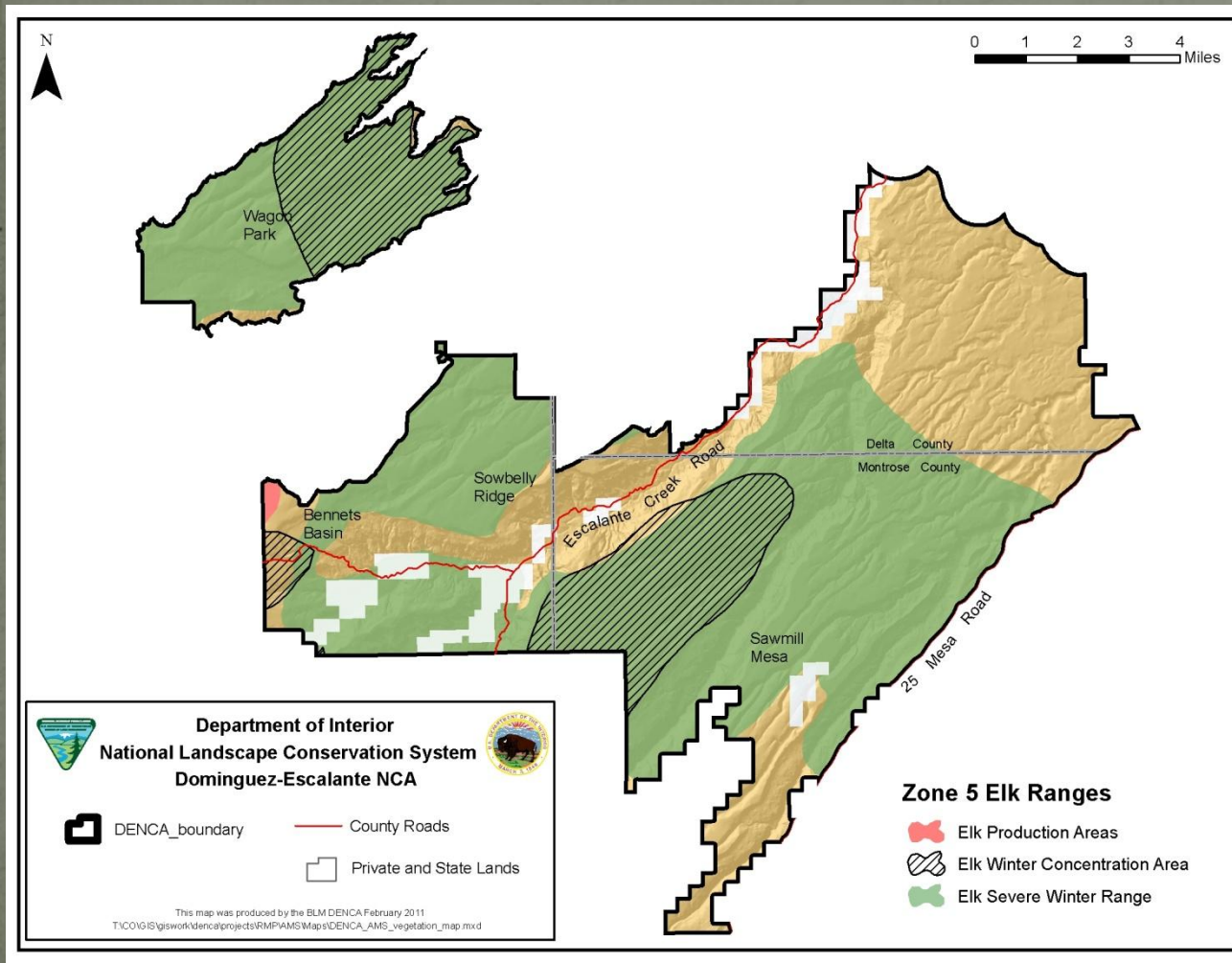


# Motorized Recreation



- Motorized recreationists use the Cactus Park (South) and Sawmill Mesa areas for trail rides
- The topography of the area, as well as the lack of adjoining motorized trails on USFS land, would make the development of an SRMA-type motorized recreation area difficult.

# Big Game Hunting



In the higher elevations of Zone 5, big game hunting is the primary activity.

The area north of Escalante Creek, southwest of the wilderness, is highly valued and most heavily used during big game hunting season.

Wagon Park is also a popular area for hunting



# Camping

- Camping is a popular activity in this zone and is often associated with hunting in the fall/winter.
- There are several designated camping sites in Escalante Canyon, but all other camping is done at dispersed, undeveloped campsites.





# Quiet Use Recreation (horse and foot)



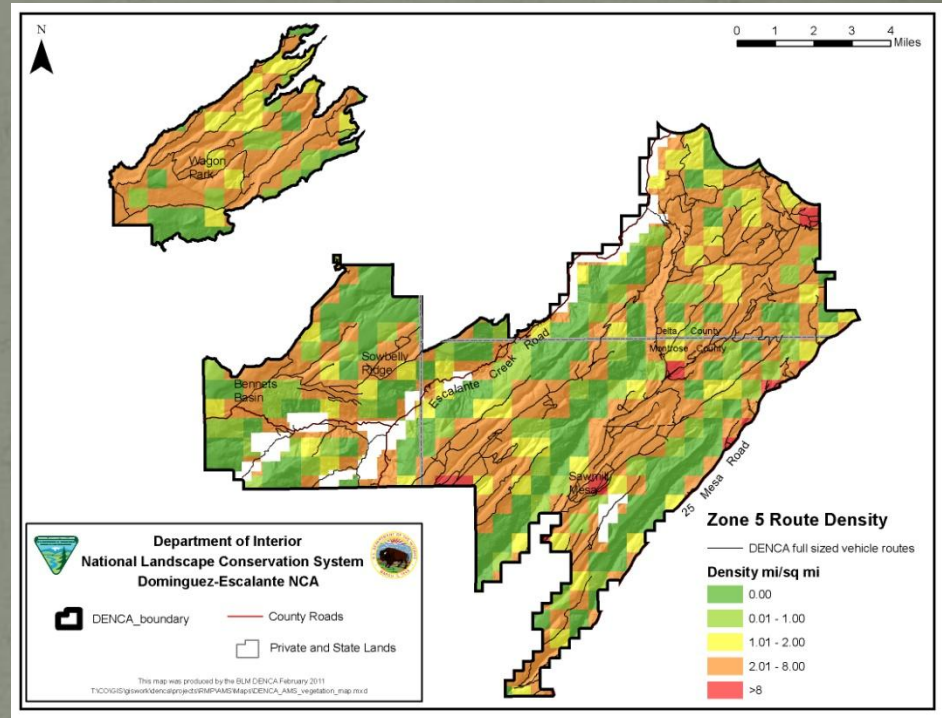
- Opportunities for development of new trails for quiet use recreation in this zone, particularly along Cottonwood Creek and Dry Fork Escalante Creek





# Lands with Wilderness Characteristics

- During scoping, the BLM received comments from the public about protection of wilderness characteristics for the roadless area southwest of the wilderness boundary
- BLM is required to maintain an inventory of areas with wilderness characteristics, and to consider these areas in RMPs.
- BLM staff are currently working to update these inventories, examining the Cottonwood Canyon and Dry Fork Escalante areas





The  
End

*A kayaker runs through the Class V conditions at the Potholes during spring runoff*